

STARK STATEMENT ON H.R. 1268, THE EMERGENCY WARTIME APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT

Wednesday, 04 May 2005

I rise in opposition to this supplemental appropriations bill for Iraq and Afghanistan. At \$82 billion, this is the second largest supplemental appropriations request passed by Congress. This is on top of an already bloated \$400 billion defense budget. Instead of borrowing more from our children, Congress ought to instead stop wasteful spending on ineffective, redundant and unnecessary weapons programs.

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A supplemental of this size wouldn't even be necessary if Congress dumped pie-in-the-sky missile defense programs, put a stop to the delayed and over budget F-22 and F-35, and ended the boondoggle Osprey that's unsafe for our troops.

There is, however, a larger, more fundamental issue here. The Bush Administration refuses to live up to the human costs of this ongoing war. Over 1,500 young Americans dead, over 12,000 young Americans maimed and wounded and countless Iraqi civilians killed in the continuing bloodshed.

The message of my vote against this bill today is clear. The immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq is necessary if the United States is serious about bringing peace and security to the Iraqi people.

The continued presence of an American occupying force only intensifies the resentment, anger and distrust that fuels the ongoing violence against our troops. It's time to bring our troops home.

This message is lost on the Bush Administration. They've sought to establish American dominance in the region and to pursue regime change

at any cost. They'll stay the course whatever the tragic consequences for the wives, husbands and families of our soldiers.

These brave young Americans face down deadly conflict in the streets each and every day. We honor their courage and service. But, for their sake, every one of us in this House must consider the burden they bear. Is it worth it for them and for all of us?

America is not safer today two years after the capricious preemptive invasion of Iraq. Terror networks continue to grow and recruit in response to the US's arrogant preeminence in the Middle East.

Terrorism has been brought to the front door of America: waged mercilessly against our troops in places like Baghdad and Tikrit. That terror won't stop until we get serious about involving the world in solving this conflict.

We must actively involve Arab states, the United Nations and our major world partners in taking a stand against these insurgents — and in taking our place. A large, multinational peacekeeping force is the soundest way forward to end the war and win the peace.

The Bush Administration can continue to throw billions at Halliburton without real accountability. They can continue to look the other way as profiteering trumps genuine reconstruction in Iraq. They can laud its new democracy as one of the key foundations necessary to sustain it — Iraq's economy — continues to flounder. The Bush Administration can do all these things, but the end of this war will not come any day sooner.

What America needs most is honest leadership and a clear strategy for Iraq. That's not reflected in this bill. It's just more money thrown at a crisis we cannot solve through force of will alone.

That is our problem here today. Congress won't force our President and his advisors to live up to their failure. We'll vote to give them another blank check without addressing the fundamental illusion of our Iraq policy: we can win the peace alone. That's a costly falsehood.

I urge my colleagues to take responsibility for the lives of our soldiers, Iraq's future, and the future security of the United States and the world. Vote down this bill. It is time to bring our troops home.

